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Soviet Arms Violations Disputed

House Panel's Democrats Call Evidence of Cheating 'Inconclusive'

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The Democratic majority of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence yesterday charged the Reagan administration has misrepresented Soviet compliance with arms-control treaties and has failed in arms-control talks to adequately heed to potential difficulties in monitoring future Soviet treaty compliance.

"While critics of Soviet compliance behavior assert that the Soviets have established a pattern of intentional cheating on arms-control agreements, the evidence is inconclusive," the committee's 11 Democrats said after a two-year study that ended late last year.

While the Soviets sometimes "scrupulously" adhered to arms-control limitations, the report asserted, at other times they "have pushed to the limit or beyond treaty provisions whose interpretation they thought they could exploit to their advantage."

The committee's conclusions, in a declassified version of an extensive report on U.S. capability to monitor compliance with arms-control agreements, were issued after an extended struggle with the intelligence community over the secrecy of its conclusions and a bitter fight with the Republican minority.

The Democrats questioned admin-

istration assertions that the Soviets had clearly violated a SALT II treaty ban on development of a new, large, intercontinental ballistic missile and encoding of missile test data.

The panel said these apparent violations were either "impossible to resolve" or stemmed from unclear treaty language.

The six-member Republican minority sharply disputed these views, charging in a separate report that the Democrats' "main ambition was to discredit the administration's judgments and dismiss potential problems in verifying compliance with future arms treaties."

Republicans and Democrats agreed, however, that the administration had failed to develop a coherent strategy for research on new arms-control monitoring technologies.

The majority report reached these major conclusions:

- The administration had not adequately used the Standing Consultative Commission (SCC), a permanent group of U.S. and Soviet officials established by the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, to resolve allegations of Soviet noncompliance with arms treaties.

Rep. Dave McCurdy (Okla.), the committee's second-ranking Democrat, said testimony before the panel by retired Air Force general Richard Ellis, the administration's ambassador to the SCC, "pretty

well indicated that many of the so-called compliance issues and allegations of violations had not been addressed in the SCC, which was the proper forum."

The report said the SCC had "achieved results" in the past, but the administration had not presented "concrete solutions" for improving the SCC, despite frequent criticism of its operations.

The Republicans said that while the SCC had resolved a few minor U.S.-Soviet disputes, it has "failed in its primary mission of resolving compliance concerns."

- The administration had focused its attention on Soviet treaty violations at the expense of sound analysis about the military significance of alleged Soviet treaty violations. McCurdy said testimony indicated that the Joint Chiefs of Staff had repeatedly declined to make such assessments.

- "The executive branch has failed over the years to develop" a sound strategy for research on new technologies for arms-control monitoring, particularly in the area of nuclear testing.

- Testimony from former U.S. arms negotiator John Tower and others indicated that the administration repeated a practice of its predecessors in which "verification issues were not entirely worked out before proposals were tabled" at the arms negotiations.